

and pleasure and never attain happiness at all for the haunting dread of the future which darkens all beyond. Surely we who are being forced into a fuller recognition of the doctrine of evolution every day and see how types are gradually perfected, see also that the end of life has often a mental power and a clearness of vision which greatly outweigh loss of sight or feebleness of limb. Of course, after a certain point body reacts upon mind and both fail together, but heaven in mercy generally allows consciousness to desert the tottering ruin, and therefore truly do the very aged have a second childhood. The right creed is best expressed in the words of Browning, who in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* has so nobly written of the progress of the individual life towards the eternal happiness of perfection.

Youth shows but half—trust God, see all, nor be afraid,
Let age approve of youth—and death complete the same!

R. A. P.

THE SUGGESTIVENESS OF A CONFERENCE.

It is almost impossible to realize that the great event of the P.N.E.U. year is over and that the Conference, which has been the subject of so much thought and work for the last two or three months, is now only a matter amongst most people for lingering and tolerant criticism. It is, however, about the practical work accomplished by the Union, of which the Conference is the crystallized demonstration, that I want to say a few words, though I should also like, if I can, to give you some idea of its more inward significance. The Annual Report will show you that the past year has not been a barren one, and I hope we are over bold or too optimistic when we say "we have lighted such a candle as by God's grace we trust shall never be put out." As it is so difficult for most of you to come into very close connection with the various developments of the Union it may interest those who could not attend the Conference to hear a few "generalisations" on the subject. We were fortunate

enough to have good audiences at all the meetings, and the papers often provoked animated discussions. This is a sure sign of life and enthusiasm, in fact I think, a spirit of trying to get to the root of the matter in hand was peculiarly present. The subjects of the papers had been made as wide and as far-reaching as possible, and when you read the verbatim reports in the July and August numbers of the *Parents' Review* you will be able to see for yourselves how each was handled. It is impossible, however, to make you feel, or to reproduce for you the sense of unity and co-operation which characterized the P.N.E.U. Conference. It has been well said that any society only exists in so far as it meets a want. The wants of the members of the P.N.E.U. are numerous, but I think many of those who attended went away with the feeling that many questions had been helpfully answered and many useful hints gained. This, however, must necessarily be nothing in comparison with the fact brought home again to each one of us, that it was really a splendid thing to a member of a society struggling, however feebly, towards erecting for itself a worthy temple in some large and generous scheme of education. I think it was Heine who said that we moderns could never build a cathedral, because we only held opinions, whereas the ancients had convictions. I think the P.N.E.U. has convictions, and that, therefore, we are slowly and surely building our cathedral.

Of the papers themselves I will say nothing, as you will be able to read them and enjoy them yourselves—all were inspiring and helpful, and some at least will have a practical outcome—and, at any rate, it is not now difficult to believe that the Union has before it a future which a few years ago seemed hardly possible. And this really tangible evidence of success makes us very humble when we think how wide are our prospects and how deep our convictions.

The material success of the Union is beyond question. Its moral success is, I believe, an equally happy and certain thing and exists not merely in consequence of material success, but, I was almost going to say, in spite of it. There is a saying that "nothing succeeds like success," but though I have no desire to invent a new paradox, yet, in a deep and spiritual sense, "nothing fails like success." Examples such as the later order of the Franciscans will occur to everyone. It is difficult for anybody, in any age, to avoid pitfalls; it is

ten times more difficult in the present time when whole masses of men do not unite for the love of abstract ideas, as they did in the ages of faith. The meanest fear, the fear of enthusiasm, keeps us generally too much apart from each other; perhaps the proudest boast of our Society is the number of people it has induced to be single-heartedly enthusiastic. We have not lost our hold on those original principles and on that original influence to which the Union owes its origin—and beyond all this, there is no possibility of identifying the Union with any of the many controversies that rage round such a big subject as education. We appeal, I think, to deeper needs and more indisputable ties. We are members of a Society which admits that it is feeling its way, that invites all contributions of suggestion and experience. Now in a society of this sort there is a fact which no one can overlook. Of some bodies you might be passive members, of this you are active members. This is a particularly inspiring view of membership: the knowledge that it is not only what you gain, but what you give, that will really bring about that true inward success which is worth more than any evidences of material success and on which our whole future depends. You can give sympathy and co-operation and you can help us to wait for results that often seem so long in coming.

We have at least one claim that may outlast the claims of many other causes—we are, in a very real sense, founded upon Nature, and in the midst of the clamour and talk and complications of modern life we have to turn our attention to the study of the nearest and simplest duties and yet the most important of all, the training of future generations, remembering that the difficulties though ever new are eternally old, or, as Stevenson expresses it in one of those fine sentences of his, when speaking of the over-subtleties of literature, "We have heard perhaps too much of lesser matters. Here is the door, here is the open air. Let us go into the ancient world."

FRANCES BLOGG.

do

CONFERENCE NOTES AND JOTTINGS.

It was perhaps an ironical Fate that ordained that for the first two days of the Conference this year, meetings of the Women's National Liberal Club should be held in the same building, in a room exactly opposite to that in which *Parents' Reviews* lent a patriotic touch of colour; pale grey Reports reminded us that life is serious, and Mrs. Steinthal and Mrs. Howard Glover spoke of those principles and theories which we are proud to hold and practise under the mystic letters P.N.E.U. When we were busy with pencils and note-books during an emphatic pause, a loud burst of applause from across the landing startled the stillness and spoiled the effect. Some straying fledglings listened for ten minutes at divers times to the opinions of National Liberal Women, and then discovered with a hot sense of wrong-doing that they were in the wrong hall! That was scarcely as bad as the feelings of those enthusiastic members unpacking and arranging for the Conference, who were pounced upon by a breaking-up meeting, and asked to pass on a gruesome pro-Boer pamphlet concerning "Women against the War." But these were bubbles, and transitory ones. The week's audience was large, varied, and enthusiastic. A most successful students' meeting was held at the close of the week, at which the chairman succeeded, oh, rare task, in keeping order, and getting some business done; but that will be duly noticed elsewhere, with the solemnity it deserves. These are mere pleasant recollections—impressions taken and afterwards felt. It was difficult to take many serious notes. The speakers were so interesting that one did not want to write down one thing for fear of missing the next, and the achievements of the reporters present filled one with awe. The lady-reporters were so business-like and sympathetic; their masculine fellows so assured they could do it better themselves, and would do so *when* they sent in their reports. But I must proceed to Mrs. Steinthal's paper, of which really painstaking notes are lying before me. Her subject was "Good Manners"